



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

2012-2105 Fishing Regulations Summary of Comments Received during the Public Scoping Period

August 2, 2011

Comments were solicited from the public during the March 15-April 22, 2011 scoping period. A survey was created, listing 20 issues identified by FWP fisheries staff. Printed surveys were provided to Regional FWP offices and license providers for distribution. People were given the choice of responding by written letter or electronically through the FWP website. The survey asked for a reaction to these issues and also requested other ideas or comments for each of the FWP Regions and Fishing Districts. A total of 260 individuals provided comments. For purposes of summarizing their responses, comments were characterized below as “yes”, “no”, “qualified yes”, “qualified no”, “other comment”, or “no opinion.” “Qualified yes” comments were generally in favor of the proposal but had some reservations or qualifications to their support. Similarly, “qualified no” comments were generally opposed to the proposal but had some reservations or qualifications. Comments characterized as “Other comment” addressed some aspect of the species’ management that was unrelated to the proposal.

Responses to Issues Identified by FWP

General statewide issues

1. Bead fishing (the pinning of a bead or artificial egg on the line above the hook) is illegal based on the current definition of snagging (see page 17 of 2011 regulations). Should bead fishing be addressed to establish conditions under which it would be legal?

Yes: 37

Qualified Yes: 1

No: 23

No opinion: 3

Other comment: 13

2. Consider restrictions on collection and movement of live bait for reasons such as preventing the future spread of invasive species.

Yes: 15

Qualified Yes: 2

Qualified No: 1

No: 7

Other comment: 1

3. Consider simplifying regulations for individual species by allowing one standard regulation and one exception for each fishing district.

Yes: 9

Qualified Yes: 1

No: 12

Other comment: 2

4. Clarify the illegality of culling fish as it relates to the definition of a “legally taken” fish (ex. See page 23 of 2011 regulations).

Yes: 12

No: 2

Other comment: 3

5. Simplify the regulations by reducing the number and variety of harvest regulation exceptions.

Yes: 4

Qualified Yes: 1

No: 11

Other comment: 8

6. Modify definition of cutthroat trout to allow some harvest of rainbow x cutthroat hybrids in situations where these fish are a threat to pure cutthroat.

Yes: 27

Qualified Yes: 2

Qualified No: 3

No: 8

Other comment: 2

No opinion: 1

Region 1 (northwest Montana) Issues

7. Investigate strategies to reduce catch and release mortality for bull trout in Lake Koocanusa.

Yes: 12

No: 5

Other comments: 2

8. Consider dropping harvest and going to catch-and-release only for bull trout in Lake Koocanusa and Hungry Horse Reservoir to reduce bull trout mortality and management costs.

Yes: 7

Qualified Yes: 1

No: 13

Other comment: 1

9. Investigate strategies to stabilize the number of spawning bull trout in the Swan drainage.

Yes: 12

No: 1

No opinion: 3

Other comment: 1

Region 2 (west-central Montana) Issues

10. Provide harvest opportunity and possibly reduce interactions with other trout by increasing harvest on expanding brown trout populations in areas such as Rock Creek (near Clinton), Bitterroot River and Clark Fork River drainages.

Yes: 13

Qualified Yes: 6

No: 11

Other comment: 2

11. Simplify the regulations throughout the Region by reducing the number and variety of harvest regulation exceptions, particularly within the Bitterroot drainage and between rivers.

Yes: 12

Qualified Yes: 4
Qualified No: 1
No: 8
Other comment: 2
No opinion: 2

12. Promote a westslope cutthroat trout fishery in Silver Bow Creek by restricting their harvest and liberalizing harvest for other trout species.

Yes: 13
Qualified Yes: 5
No: 5
Other comment: 1
No opinion: 1

Region 3 (southwest Montana) Issues

13. Consider standardizing the brown trout limit throughout the Jefferson River in order to simplify regulations

Yes: 5
Qualified Yes: 3
Qualified No: 1
No: 2
No opinion: 1

Region 4 (north-central Montana) Issues

14. Consider simplification and standardization of trout limits on the Missouri and Smith Rivers

Yes: 11
Qualified Yes: 2
No: 1
Other comments: 3

15. Consider appropriateness of spearing whitefish on the Missouri River from Craig Bridge to Sheep Creek Bridge

Yes: 0
No: 12
Other comment: 2
No opinion: 1

Region 7 (southeast Montana) Issues

16. Consider reducing sauger limits in the Tongue River above the Reservoir to conserve a remnant population

Yes: 4

Qualified Yes: 3

Qualified No: 1

Eastern District

17. Consider reducing catfish limits to conserve this native species

Yes: 23

Qualified Yes: 1

Qualified No: 1

No: 4

18. Consider liberalizing sauger regulations in the Missouri River above (and including) Ft. Peck Reservoir in order to allow more harvest

Yes: 5

Qualified Yes: 2

No: 3

No opinion: 1

Eastern & Central Districts

19. Consider reducing burbot limits to conserve this native species

Yes: 8

Qualified Yes: 2

Qualified No: 1

No: 5

20. Consider separating the sauger and walleye standard limits to allow more flexibility in managing each species

Yes: 14

Qualified Yes: 1

No: 1

Other comment: 1

Other Comments Received during the Scoping Period

For issues where more than one respondent expressed a similar view, the number of such comments is indicated in parentheses.

Region 1

- Establish daily/possession limits for perch (4)
- Leave perch regulations as is (2)
- Allow the use of 4-6 lines through the ice for pike, only (3)
- **Flathead Lake**
 - Allow spear fishing for suckers, lake trout, or lake whitefish in Flathead Lake (4)
 - Take the slot limit off (or modify) for lake trout (4)
 - Against seining lake trout from Flathead Lake
- **Kootenai River**
 - Protect rainbow trout below Libby Dam (2)
 - Implement slot limit for trout in Kootenai of 10 and 30 inches (2)
 - Ban treble hooks on the Kootenai River (2)
 - Implement catch and release and barbless hook regulations in the Kootenai River
 - No motorized boats in Kootenai River above Hwy 37 bridge
 - Ban kokanee snagging in Kootenai
- **Lower Clark Fork River**
 - Increase tip up limit to 6/angler on Noxon (2)
 - Allow use of 4 lines when fishing for pike from mouth of Thompson River to Idaho line (2)
 - Stop the use of live bait at various streams on the Clark Fork near Noxon
 - Increase the line limit to 6 for the Western District, especially Noxon Reservoir
- Protect bull trout in South Fork Flathead
- Stop killing spawning rainbows in the Flathead River system
- Allow use of edible portions of perch as bait
- Outlaw use of chumming with corn for kokanee
- Prohibit kokanee harvest in Flathead Rivers and Forks
- Enact a yellow perch harvest of 25 (excepting Lake Mary Ronan)
- Enact a bass limit on Lake Blaine
- Allow harvest of trout in S. Fork Flathead from reservoir up to Meadow Creek footbridge
- Allow 4 pop up lines while ice fishing
- Restrict harvest of crappie
- Raise bag limits for non-native trout in Swan River drainage
- Reduce northern pike bag limit to 5 daily

- Set a season limit for bull trout on Swan Lake and start using catch cards
- Allow year round (or extended) harvest of northern pike on Flathead River above the lake (2)
- Allow spearfishing for northern pike through the ice in Stillwater River drainage (2)
- Maintain bull trout fishery on Lake Koocanusa
- Allow use of spearfishing to harvest northern pike

Region 2

- **Georgetown Lake**
 - Keep open year round
 - Keep open year round (except Stuart Mill Bay)
 - Keep open year round for salmon (2)
 - Extend the season for salmon
 - Decrease daily limit for combined trout from 5 to 3, and implement size restrictions.
- **Warm Springs Wildlife Management Area**
 - Standardize regulations
 - Extend season in Job Corps Ponds, Pond 3, all ponds (2)
- Decrease combined trout limits to 3 fish with catch and release sections or size restrictions
- On Rock Creek, establish the float/fish season on the basis of flow (cfs) rather than date
- Allow the use of smelt as bait in the Clark Fork River to suppress northern pike
- **Bitterroot River**
 - Restrict boat use on the West Fork
 - Have boat-free days on the Bitterroot River
 - Regulate Mitchell Slough as a tributary to delay spring opener to protect spawning rainbow trout
 - No changes needed to catch and release sections
 - Allow children up to 16 to use live bait here and other drainages as well
 - Catch and release waters need to be expanded to protect wild trout fisheries
- Establish permit system for guides/outfitters on the Blackfoot River
- Allow spearfishing in the Bitterroot or Clark Fork rivers (5)
- Establish more catch and release areas
- Eliminate bait fishing on rivers and streams to protect bull trout
- No changes needed anywhere
- Establish custom regulations on Paracini Pond along the Clark Fork above Deer Lodge

Region 3

- Institute a slot limit for burbot
- Lower the limits on Clark Canyon
- **Madison River**
 - Make the section from Hebgen Dam to Quake Lake inlet catch and release and open year round
 - Should be open year round from Lyons Bridge to Ennis as the existing closures to protect spawning rainbows are not necessary
 - Reynolds Bridge to Lyons Bridge and Ennis to Ennis Lake stretches should be closed only during the April 1 to 3rd Saturday in May period
 - Ennis Dam to confluence with Missouri should have a brown trout limit of 1 daily
 - Open the Madison River from Lyons to McAtee on a year round basis
 - Stop allowing children to keep fish on the Madison River
- Create a daily limit of 5 for walleye on all lakes and rivers, preferably with a slot.
- Treble hooks should not be permitted on catch and release sections
- Change stretch of Big Hole River where combined trout limit applies to headwaters to Silver Bridge to 5 trout with no size restrictions. Once 2 fish are harvested, angler can take fish from no other section for the day
- Extend catch and release season for whitefish to include October 15 to December 1 on the Big Hole
- Beaverhead River from Clark Canyon Dam to Pipe Organ Bridge should allow only artificial lures and catch and release for all trout beginning October 15 through closing on November 30. Combined trout limit should be 3 daily and in possession and only 1 over 16 inches and only 1 rainbow
- Boulder River near Big Timber, the Gallatin River from the Yellowstone Park boundary to the Highway 191 bridge, and the Stillwater River should have a combined trout limit of 3 daily and in possession, only 1 over 12 inches.
Jefferson River should be catch and release for rainbow trout

Region 4

- **Holter Reservoir**
 - Reduce the slot for walleye to 24-28 inches.
 - Increase walleye limit to at least 20 (2)
- Increase walleye limit to 20 on Hauser and Canyon Ferry Reservoirs
- Allow for harvest of brown trout by adults on Canyon Ferry
- Delay opening Dearborn River to fishing to protect spawning rainbow trout
- Decrease harvest of trout on Belt Creek
- Open fishing year round on the Marias River downstream of Sullivan Bridge
- Lower limits on smaller creeks to avoid excessive angler pressure and raise limits on larger creeks to make up for the opportunity

- Allow spearing through ice for northern pike on East Fork Reservoir
- **Missouri River**
 - Rescind No Limit regulation for walleye below Holter Dam (782—all but two of these comments were received as part of a package of signed petitions from Walleyes Unlimited)
 - Maintain No Limit regulation for walleye below Holter Dam
 - Change walleye limit below Holter Reservoir to 5
 - Increased combined trout limit to 5 for stretch from Holter Dam to Great Falls
 - Disallow use of gas-powered motorboats from Holter Dam to Cascade except during hunting and trapping seasons
 - Change the walleye limit on Missouri River from Cascade Bridge to Black Eagle Dam to 10 daily, 20 in possession.
- Allow culling of walleyes
- Rescind rule on ice shelters on Lake Helena and Hauser (2)
- Smith River from Camp Baker to Eden Bridge should have a combined trout limit of 3 trout daily and in possession under 12 inches and 1 over 22 inches

Region 5

- **Bighorn River/Yellowtail Reservoir**
 - Delete the requirement to use artificial lures below the Yellowtail Dam Afterbay and allow bait fishing on entire Bighorn River or to Bighorn FAS (15)
 - Standardize regulations and have reciprocal licenses with Wyoming on Bighorn Lake
 - Increase sauger limit to 3 daily, 6 in possession in Afterbay
 - Change combined trout limit on Bighorn River to 3 daily and in possession and only 1 trout over 16 inches

Region 6

- Work to open historically “open to fishing” areas below Fresno and other dams.

Region 7

- Establish a slot limit for sauger
- Consider a daily limit of 50 bluegills on Castle Rock Lake

Eastern and Central Districts

- Eliminate the use of setlines (2)
- Establish a slot limit of 17-24 inches for walleye
- **Yellowstone River**
 - Rescind the new trout limit on the Yellowstone and revert to 5 brown and/or rainbow trout daily and in possession with only one over 18 inches (20)
 - Rescind the new trout limit on the Yellowstone River (9)
 - Change Yellowstone trout limit to 10 lbs/10 fish or 5 with no size restriction
 - Maintain 18-26 inch slot limit
- **Catfish**
 - Limit harvest of catfish, especially those over 7 pounds
 - Lower catfish limits (3)
 - Consider a slot limit for catfish
 - Lower catfish limit to 5 daily, 10 in possession
- Remove restriction on the use of live sculpins for bait
- Possession limits need to be twice the daily limit for all species
- For paddlefish, change maximum hook size to 10/0, allow longer gaffs, allow fishing at night.
- Change Central District trout standard to 3 daily and in possession, only 1 over 14 inches, with artificial lures, with catch and release October 15-December 31 and April 1-3rd Saturday in May.